

**NTSB Forum on Driver Education and Training
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Introduction

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Good afternoon! My name is Charles Butler and I am one of two Directors in the AAA National Office Traffic Safety Department in Heathrow, Florida. AAA is a federation of 77 clubs in the United States and Canada representing 46 million members.

Since its founding in 1902, AAA has been devoted to helping make America's highways safer and provide individuals of all ages with the education and skills they need to be safe drivers. In fact, AAA pioneered the concept of formal driver education and training in the early 1930's.

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We recognize the importance of Graduated Driver Licensing and AAA clubs have been lobbying of strong GDL laws in all 50 states with special emphasis on passenger and night-time restrictions and supervised behind-the-wheel experience in diverse settings. As a complement to GDL, AAA believes high quality driver education and training programs can enhance safety and mobility. To be an effective crash countermeasure, driver education and training must emphasize safe operation practices and be based on the results of young novice driver crash research. It should be considered as an important element of a "systems approach" which incorporates the licensing and enforcement communities. Driver education should emphasize visual search skills, techniques for paying attention to driving, speed and space management, driving emergencies, risk recognition and avoidance and basic vehicle control skills.

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AAA encourages new drivers not to rely completely on formal driver education programs—but to obtain as much supervised "behind-the-wheel" driving experience as possible before encountering complex driving situations and environments alone. AAA encourages parents/guardians to take an active role in their child's education by assisting new drivers in gaining experience under safe conditions and establishing clear expectations related to such safe driving practices as driving time, place, weather conditions, seat belt use, number and age of passengers, alcohol, drugs, fatigue and emotions.

AAA is concerned by the decline in the availability of quality driver education and training programs in both the public and private sectors. Driver education and training opportunities are declining at a time when the teen population is

increasing dramatically and the nation's novice drivers still incur more fatalities and injuries per-vehicle-mile driven than any other age group.

Background

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Beginning in the 1930's, AAA clubs emerged as a leading force in educating new drivers. Working as a AAA consultant, the late professor Amos Neyhart (the father of driver education) of Pennsylvania State University developed and taught the first driver training programs. In the late 1930's, AAA published *How To Drive* and *Sportsmanlike Driving* -- its first driver education textbooks.

Today, *Responsible Driving*, *How To Drive* and *Teaching Your Teens to Drive* are examples of AAA's continued contribution to developing comprehensive teaching and learning materials that are used in public school driver education, commercial driving schools and fleet driver training courses.

The decline in the availability of public school driver education programs coupled with the anticipated growth in novice drivers represents a major safety issue. To ensure that young people survive the greatest threat to their future, we must reduce traffic deaths and injuries by improving the safety performance of young drivers.

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In addition to raising awareness of the seriousness of the novice driver safety issue and improving the licensing process by implementing comprehensive Graduated Driver Licensing laws in all 50 states, AAA is in the process of implementing a unique, state-of-the-art driver education program that will improve the educational process. AAA's *Licensed to Learn* driver education curriculum will train novices in skills needed to avoid crashes by:

- * Standardizing driver education course content
- * Implementing uniform instructor qualifications
- * Mandating more behind-the-wheel driving experience (Slide 5)

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Licensed to Learn will provide parents and adults with tools, models and instructional units they need to support young driver education. To help the public select sources for quality driver education courses AAA publishes a brochure entitled "Choosing a Driving School". Also, AAA is in the process of pilot testing a concept for its new Approved Driving School Network (ADSN). The ADSN design is based on a model similar to AAA's Approved Accommodations and Approved Auto Repair programs. Clubs review applicants and select quality driving schools to deliver AAA novice driver education and driver improvement

programs within their club territory. This educational approach fills a void in states where fewer public schools offer driver education.

Current

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In line with its stated commitment to provide the most current and effective driver training available, the AAA *Licensed to Learn* driver education program is a departure from the conventional lecture and read DE course, in that it is based on an in-depth analysis of thousands of crashes involving teen drivers and the LTL instructional content is consistent with each delivery.

This analysis of crash causation in addition to a better understanding of the learning styles of youth, indicate the need for a change in the content, sequencing and types of learning experiences offered, both in-car and in-classroom. One of the most obvious needs is for greater use of technology and much more emphasis on interactive learning and feedback if change in so called student attitude is to occur along with desired changes in behavior.

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Causes of Young Driver Crashes

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LTL consists of a combination of in-class, in-car and self-study instruction and provides novices opportunities to gain those experiences that enable drivers to recognize and deal with the hazards of the highway environment. In keeping with state requirements, *LTL* provides a minimum 30 hours of in-class instruction that can be easily adjusted up to 50 hours.

However, recognizing that the required 6 hours of in-car instruction is barely enough to master the fundamentals of driving, the curriculum can be adjusted to raise the number to 10 hours. A number of innovations are introduced to maximize active participation in the instructional process.

It is unrealistic to expect students to fully absorb the instruction provided in the classroom. Therefore, each student receives self-study materials for each LTL classroom session.

Practice supervised by qualified adults is needed for safe driving in everyday traffic and engaging in advanced levels of instruction. The incorporation of supervised practice into the preparation of novice drivers has been encouraged in recent times by graduated driver licensing (GDL) systems which require specified numbers of hours to be completed during a learner and/or provisional

license phase before novices are eligible for full licensure. The teacher-student-parent partnership that results using this LTL instructional approach increases the focus on safe driving practices.

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The LTL Classroom DVD contains approximately four hours of high visual interactive video instruction and 365 discussion frames on a two-disk set. The software contains over 2700 driving scenarios and is designed to train and test driver attention and visual detection as well as risk perception and evaluation.

About 90% of the scenes are filmed from the driver point-of-view and one-third of the scenes contain four-camera video footage. The common traffic situations contained in the DVD are based on teen crash research and can be customized to teach and test knowledge and skills in an individual, self-paced, automated way.

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Here is a short video clip from the Classroom DVD. Each video clip lasts from one to five minutes and is pre- and post-ceded by a PowerPoint slide. Again each of the 2700 driving scenarios in the Classroom DVD originates from young novice driver crash research.

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LTL classroom instruction is highly interactive –between instructor and student, video and student and student and student. These participatory classroom units are peer-focused and provide opportunities for self study and group work. These are needed to clarify health and safety values and to enhance personal motivation and social responsibility.

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The *LTL* In-Car training component differs in several ways from behind-the-wheel (BTW) training given in most public and commercial school programs. First, it raises the number of hours from 6, established as a consensus standard almost a half a century ago to 10 hours recognizing that more BTW, professionally supervised, training is required to better prepare a new driver.

Secondly, *LTL* in-car instruction is integrated with classroom instruction. The 13 improved In-Car lessons focus on skill development, teach driving and perceptual skills and provide detailed feedback on driver performance.

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Additional practical application of *LTL* instruction is accomplished through *Teaching Your Teens to Drive* – an instructional unit that supports parent involvement in young driver education. This 13-lesson parent/teen package

follows the sequence of LTL In-Car lessons, contains an in-car checklist and provides guidance for parent driving and supervision. Practice supervised by qualified adults is needed for safe driving in everyday traffic and engaging in advanced levels of instruction.

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To achieve *LTL* program goals necessitates the selection and training of professional driving instructors. The results of crash analysis demonstrated a critical need to provide learning experiences that enhance visual search processes, judgment and decision-making. To deliver the program, instructional personnel must become proficient as facilitators of learning and decision making rather than dispensers of information via the lecture method, or simple direction giver's in-car.

To prepare personnel to deliver the *LTL* novice driver curriculum, three 40-hour instructor preparation courses are available: Course I – Basic Performance and the Role of the Driver, Course II – Classroom Instructional Processes and Course III – In-Vehicle Instructional Processes.

Future

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AAA believes an educated driver is a more effective decision-maker. The ever-increasing demands of the highway transportation system—more drivers, more vehicles, more stress—underscore the need for a more effective driver education and training system. Novice drivers particularly need rigorous instruction and training to develop safe driving practices, and improvement of perceptual abilities and management of time and space in traffic.

Therefore AAA urges that priority be given to these future efforts to improve driver education and training:

- Intensified government and private sector research and development to make driver education and training programs more efficient, effective, relevant and stimulating.
- Driver education should be reestablished as a national priority to stimulate the states to implement more and better driver education and training courses for beginning drivers.
- Dynamic, interactive, multimedia software must be developed to diagnose, clarify, and reinforce modification of new drivers' risk-taking styles and to demonstrate their consequences.

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- Multi-phase driver education programs must be developed and implemented. Future AAA efforts will be focused on developing pre-

licensing, refresher and advanced driver training and driver improvement program courses.

- To finance driver education and training programs adequately, states should develop cooperative financing initiatives between public and private sectors. The objective should be to increase the number of students receiving high-quality instruction, including on-the-road and classroom training.

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- States should mandate more supervised novice driver “behind-the-wheel” training experience, implement uniform driver education course content and higher uniform instructor qualifications. State standards covering the ownership and/or operation of driver education and training facilities, classroom instruction, and instructor qualifications and performance should be promulgated and enforced by the appropriate licensing agency to ensure consumer protection and quality instruction.
- Implement instructional programs for the disabled
- States should enhance the quality and availability of teacher preparation courses for prospective driver education instructors, through their public and private universities and other local sources. In the future, AAA will continue its partnership efforts with the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association, colleges and universities and other local sources to enhance the quality and availability of driver education teacher preparation and instructor certification programs.

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Safer Driving Fewer Crashes

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Questions